



Herbert Bateman IV, Darrell Bock, and Gordon Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic), 2012.

I have to confess at the very start that when I first noticed this title I was exceedingly skeptical of it. I imagined that it would be a sort of fundamentalist attempt to justify the worst kind of eisegesis which sees in the Old Testament, behind every tree and in every bush, foreshadowings of Jesus and little more than a flattening of the entire text to a 'See, Jesus is lurking here too' exercise in frustration. I – furthermore – imagined that it would be laced with annoying citations from maniacal Church Fathers like Ambrose and Cyprian and Justin and Augustine who just couldn't stop themselves from being wrong in their readings of the Old Testament. And, finally, in my preconceptions I did preconceive that this book would be of little use.

I was, I am honestly glad to say, wrong on each count. This volume is excellently written and sensitively done with an acute eye directed both at the Old Testament context of the texts in question and one at the Reception History which those texts evoked (and yes, it seems everyone is doing Reception History these days, even if they don't call it by its proper name).

This volume is comprised of three major sections: *Part I: Promises of a King* in which Gordon Johnston discusses 'messianic trajectories' in various books of the Old Testament (including Genesis, Amos, the Psalms, Isaiah, and Jeremiah among others). Surprisingly, in his discussion of Isaiah, Johnston skips Chapter 7, which I confess to finding singularly odd. Otherwise his treatment is nicely done, as he examines first the Old Testament context of the passages in question and then their 'canonical' meaning.

Part II: Expectations of a King by Herbert Bateman IV deals with the thorniest of questions. As he remarks at the opening of the segment:

The intent of *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King* is to make sense of Jesus' and the early church's messianic claim (p. 211).

No small task but Bateman does as good a job as any in addressing the how and why. This segment of the book is simply stellar and even if the other parts weren't of much use, the volume would still be worthwhile because of it.

Part III: The Coming of a King is Darrell Bock's contribution to the work and Bock does a good job of detailing the New Testament's appropriation of the Old Testament's messianic trajectories. I remain, still, amazed that the work of Mogens Müller was not consulted whilst Köstenberger's was. This, frankly, simply makes no sense to me. Further, Bock's methodology is a bit different than one might expect- for he begins not with the Gospels but with the Catholic Epistles and Revelation from which he moves to Paul and then and only then to John and the Synoptics. This 'backwards' approach strikes me as a bit strange. He does offer an attempted justification for this procedure, suggesting that it allows him to work from the least controversial messianic statements to the more controversial (p. 333) but, in my view, it just doesn't work that way. There's certainly little reason to suggest that Christological/messianic texts in Revelation are 'less controversial' than those in Matthew. Perhaps I'm missing it- but frankly I just don't agree.

The volume concludes with an appendix on Genesis 3:15 (which causes me to wonder why Genesis 3 wasn't discussed in its proper place early on in the volume). Never mind, though, as the discussion is relevant and articulate.

One other observation on the volume is worth making and should be made: it is beautifully and lushly illustrated with charts, graphs, graphics, and tables. Nearly every page or two or three has some very, very well done graphic which leads readers to a better understanding of the material at hand.

The shortcomings of the volume (its lack of reference to some of the most important materials on the subject and its at times idiosyncratic organizing principles) do not outweigh its positive contributions. Readers at all stages of experience will enjoy it, I imagine. Indeed, I would be very surprised if anyone picking it up failed to learn something from it that they had never noticed or known.

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